

ANOTHER WAY.

BY ANDREW LANG.

*AH, come to me in dreams, and then,
One saith,* I shall be well again,
For then the night will more than pay
The weary longing of the day.*

Nay, come not *thou* in dreams, my sweet,
With shadowy robes, and silent feet,
And with the voice, and with the eyes
That greet me in a soft surprise.

Last night, last night, in dreams we met,
And how, to-day, shall I forget,
Or how, remembering, restrain
Mine incommunicable pain?

Nay, where thy folk and country are,
Dwell thou remote, apart, afar,
Nor mingle with the shapes that sweep
The melancholy ways of Sleep.

But if, perchance, the shadows break,
If dreams depart, and men awake,
If face to face at length we see,
Be thou the first to welcome me.

* Matthew Arnold.

"INJA."

BY AMÉLIE RIVES.

JUNE in Virginia, and all the cherries ripe! One saw them in red and purple-black knots against the moving green of leaves and the intersecting slivers of dull blue sky. Their sunburnt, subtle fragrance mingled with the fresh perfume of meadows rained upon; their intermittent pattering upon the grass below was as pleasant a sound in its way as the cool noise made by the plashing of an oriole in a rain-filled stump near by. One was vaguely conscious of the monotone of a half-asleep wind through trees and grass, and the diminuendo of a locust's jarring song somewhere in the glittering distance.

Under the largest of two red-heart cherry-trees sat a girl shelling pease. She had a professional way of inserting her small, well-curved thumb into the green shales, ousting their contents with a single movement. Sometimes a cherry would fall upon her dark braids, and drop thence in among the verdant contents of the yellowware bowl. Several handsome Dorking

hens gathered under the tree to peck at the fallen fruit, dispersing at each new descent of the sleek, scarlet spheres, with a nervous dip of fan-tails and a hysterical squawk. A large, well-to-do-looking katydid leaped suddenly upon the edge of the almost full bowl, and began to arrange its toilet with its slim, serrated legs, regarding the world at large from its clear, light red eyes. The girl reached forth a cautious hand, and seizing the busy creature by its furled wings, deliberately held it out to a stout speckled hen that was tiptoeing about close by. Then she pushed back her fallen hair from her eyes with the back of her other hand, and went on with her pea-shelling in easy unconcern.

"There'll be one less of the nasty things to keep me awake nights," she said, addressing the speckled matron, who regarded her greedily, her bill still ornamented with one of the hapless insect's long green legs.

Just then the sound of a horse at gallop broke in upon the somnolent noises of the

day, approaching nearer, until it ceased behind a clump of lilacs at the rickety horse-block by the low gate, and the rider, dismounting, entered the yard. The girl looked up without ceasing her work.

"That you, father?" she said. Her voice was rich in throat notes, and she spoke with scarcely a movement of her lips. The voice that answered was not unlike.

"Well, yease, it's me, sugar, en mo' besides—considbul mo', by Guinea! Hyah's 'nough lettahs tuh lars yuh fur a yeah, ef they wuz dealt out fyah."

"How many?"

"Five."

"Lor', that ain't many. Shuh! father, they're all samples."

"Samples?" said old Sterling. "Samples fur what?"

"For a new dress. Oh! oh! ain't this lovely? Look, father—the precise color of a cherry! Does it become me? Look."

She laid the bright bit of silk against her hair, and glanced up at her father for approval.

"It cert'n'y is pret'y," he said, slowly, biting his large thumb-joint in contemplation; "en it do become yuh; but yuh know I've aluz had a kinder hoanin' arter green. Firs' time I ever sot eyes on yo' mother, she had on a apple-green frawk, hitched up with a sash. Yo' face 'd look like a peach on a bough, ef yuh wuz dressed in green. Don't yuh think green's pret'y?"

"Oh yes, it's pretty, certainly, some kinds of green. Apple green's hideous. What would I be like in apple green? I'd be for all the world like a katydid, with my long arms and legs."

Sterling looked a little blank. He dropped his entirely blue eyes, and began to step upon the edge of one cowhide boot with the other.

"They tells me apple green is mighty fashnubble," he said, presently.

"Oh, they'll say anything's fashionable to make it sell," replied the girl, returning to her pea-shelling.

Her father sat down near her on a wheelbarrow, and felt furtively at a parcel concealed in his voluminous coat-tail pocket. The removal of his soft felt hat disclosed tufty masses of absolutely white hair, combed up and backward from a full square brow. His daughter inherited the abundant hair in its pristine blackness, and a smaller and narrower reproduction

of the forehead. Her eyebrows, though shapely, were singularly thick and broad, looking much like strips of fur above her claret-colored eyes. She was like her father also in the pose of her handsome head, which was set forward and yet erect on a long brown throat.

"I cert'n'y wud like tuh see yuh in green, Inja," said Sterling, after a pause. "S'posin' I got you a frawk, a green frawk, yuh'd make it, wudn't yuh?"

"You'd better ask me if I'd wear it."

"Well, yuh wud, wudn't you?"

"It depends, of course—"

"Did'n' I hyah yuh say ez how yuh wanted a new silk?"

India nodded, looking up for an instant from the now brimming bowl.

"Well," he said, with an evident effort, bringing forth the hitherto concealed parcel, "thya 'tis!"

"What, really!" cried the girl.

She set the bowl of pease on the ground at her side, laying her large straw hat over it, to protect its contents from the raids of the gluttonous Dorkings; then she took the parcel from her father's hands and began to untie it.

"That thar's moughty good string, sugar," Sterling could not refrain from observing, as the stout twine "tchicked" in several places under a garden knife which she took from the hollow of her blue-calico lap.

"Tain't *now*," she replied, concisely. The last wrapping had been unfurled, and she sat staring down at the contents of the parcel on her knees for a second or two before bursting into loud but musical laughter.

"Yuh don' like it?" said Sterling, timidly. She held her side with her hand, and laughed and laughed again.

"Oh! oh! oh!" she gasped, finally, "who *did* bamboozle you into buying this thing, father? Oh my! oh my! I never in my life saw such a— Ha! ha! ha! Oh! ho! ho! ho! Oh dear!"

Sterling dropped his head a little, and took a corner of the vivid silk between his hard thumb and forefinger. He glanced half-shamedly at her from under his curling white brows. "It—it 'll do for curtains, won't it?" he asked, in a low voice. "Yuh know I ain' no jedge. I only wanted to please yuh." His voice shook a little.

"To please me?" repeated India, lifting her handsome furry brows, and turning



UNDER THE CHERRY-TREE.

toward him for an instant—she never vouchsafed to any one more prolonged attention—"and in the name of sense what on earth made you think I'd like a dress the color of a stagnant pond? Goodness! it makes my teeth wrinkle. Oh Lor'! father! is *that* what you call ap-ap-apple green?" She burst into another



"IT WAS A PORTRAIT OF HIS WIFE."—[SEE PAGE 37.]

violent fit of laughter, holding her eyes with her finger-tips, and swaying back and forth.

A slow red had come into Sterling's cheek. "I reckon 'tis pow'ful ugly," he said. "I wuz a fool not tuh"—he cleared his throat and went on—"not tuh ask some woman or ruther tuh git it fur me. I'm sorry, honey."

"Oh, it don't make any difference," India said, magnanimously. "I can swap it for something, I reckon." She rose suddenly, refolding the obnoxious silk in its paper covering. "It must be near three o'clock," she said. "Mr. Lely will be over at half past three to see about something."

Sterling turned a trifle sharply, the red still burning on his handsome high cheek-bones. "He's too darned eternal over here," he said. "I don't like him; I wish he'd keep his darned dorgs and critters tuh his own place. How'd yuh know he wuz comin'?"

"By listening when he informed me of the fact," replied the girl, with quiet insolence, adding over her shoulder, as she paused in the doorway, "I don't see why you should visit it on Mr. Lely because I don't like the dress."

Mr. Ruthven Lely came at half past three. He was a New York stock-broker who had recently purchased a farm in the neighborhood. He had several fine Irish setters, two of which he had given Sterling to train for him, and his interest in their progress gave him an excuse for frequent visits to Sterling's place, and an opportunity to see much of India, whose beauty had excited his admiration. He had flamboyant red hair; and his mustache was of the same color, as were also the rims to his eyes. Sterling, who was a man of prejudices, had taken a dislike to him from the first.

"Mornin'," he said, unsmilingly, as Lely advanced along the garden path, followed by a third setter.

Lely replied by asking if Miss India had recovered from her fright of yesterday afternoon.

"What fright?" asked Sterling, straightening his large shoulders; "who frightened her?"

"Unfortunately I did," replied Lely, easily. "It was after dark, and I nearly rode over her, near Pringle's mill."

Sterling patted the dog, which had left its master to fawn upon him. "I don't reckon it's damaged her constitution seriously," he said, grimly.

"It was really a dangerous thing," urged Lely. "Er—wouldn't it be as well, Sterling, for you to suggest to your daughter not to walk out so late in the evening?"

Sterling lifted his big blue eyes slowly and steadily until they rested full upon the rose-edged orbs of Mr. Lely. "It mought," he said. "It mought be well tuh do lots and gobs of things I ain' never tried en ain' never goin' tuh do. I s'pose yuh've come tuh see 'bout them dorgs. I've been wraslin' with them dorgs like Jacop with th' angel—though they're fur 'nough from angels, I'll say that fur 'em. The leetlest one's the best."

India appeared at the door. She had changed her blue calico gown for one of white linen, and wore a belt of orange-colored ribbon.

"Dinner's ready, father," she said, composedly. "Good-morning, Mr. Lely."

Lely took off his hat, and held it in his hand while he spoke to her. "I was just asking your father after you," he said. "I was afraid the shock of last night might have given you a headache."

"I haven't time for headaches," she replied. "Are you coming in now, father?"

"He wants tuh see his dorgs," said Sterling, half turning away.

"Oh, there's no hurry, I assure you, Mr. Sterling," said Lely. "I will wait for you out here. It's charming under these cherry-trees."

Sterling took his massive cleft chin between his thumb and forefinger, and again fastened his eyes stirlessly upon those of Lely. "Ef yuh're goin' tuh call me Sterling," he said, "do it. Ef yuh ain't, don't. 'Mister' ain' differ'nt one time from what it is another. I hope you will accommodate me."

Lely's face waxed ruddy above his rufescent mustache. "Certainly, certainly," he said, turning away.

India helped her father to bacon and

greens before she spoke. "You don't want anybody to teach you how to be rude—do you, father?" she then said.

"I kyarnt abide that fellar!" broke forth Sterling, flinging himself back in his chair. "He smells sweet."

"Does he?" said India, with the characteristic lifting of her brows. "You can't say the same for many of our acquaintances."

"A man 'ain' got no more business smellin' sweet than a oak-tree's got ter smell like a villet. Let the wimmen-folks scent theirselves up if they likes—but a man! Shuh! Though that red-head ain't a man ennyhow. You jes oughter see him try 'n' whistle tuh his dorgs. Fweheuh! Fweheuh! Fweheuh!"—imitating the impotent whistle. "He'll stan' in the middle uv a pertater patch en go like that thyar fur ten minutes at a time. Uv co'se his dorgs don't respect him. Dorgs is mighty sensibul, besides havin' the keenest noses goin' fur a smell. Yuh try to fin' a dorg ez is goin' tuh love a man that smells that a-way—I dar' yuh tuh do it."

"I don't think I'll try," said the girl, leaning on one hand while she fed her big tortoise-shell cat with the other.

"En he wrops his neck up in a silk handkercher when it gets to'ds dark," pursued Sterling, vehemently, "en kyars little pills in a bottle fur his so'e throat. Did you know he had a so'e throat? En cuts his nails in p'int, like he'd got tuh grub fur roots like a monkey. En one day I wuz in tuh ole Aun' Nancy Skinner's fur a light tuh my pipe, en I see some shirts uv hisn ez she had tuh wash, en by Guinea, ef his name warn't stuck in sky-blue on every blessed shirt tail! Yah!" he ended, rising and pushing away his chair, "he makes me right down sick tuh my stummuch!"

Suddenly he turned, and seizing her arm, drew her toward the window. "Thyar!" he said; "look at him now, will yuh! Did yuh ever see sech a bawn fool?"

Mr. Lely was nearly dislocating his spine in his efforts to rid the legs of his trousers of some Spanish-needles.

"Wouldn' Jorhn laugh at him if he cud see him now? What's the matter 'twix' yuh and Jorhn, ennyhow?" He turned and looked at her gravely. "I've been noticin' ez how things are mighty changed 'twixt yuh and him fur some time. Is yo' quoiled?"

"Not that I am aware of," replied the girl. "He smells anything but sweet. He's always been walking through mud puddles when I have the pleasure of seeing him, and wet leather's not overwhelmingly pleasant to smell."

"Inja," said her father, putting both gentle, brawny hands on her delicate shoulders and turning her toward him, "look hyuh, honey. Yuh're aluz takin' up fur that thyar fellar out thyar en a-runnin' down uv Jorhn Nixon. Yuh cert'n'y ain't got enny notions in yo' pret'y head 'bout that thyar Lely—is yuh?"

"Notions? How do you mean?"

"Is yuh—well, fur instance—is yuh got enny kinder idea uv his askin' yuh tuh mah'y him some time?"

"Why?"

"'Cause, honey," he said, very gently, "'twould go moughty hard with yo' ole dad tuh think it."

"I would be a lady," said the girl.

He took her soft face into his broad palms and looked down into her clear eyes—"Ain' yuh one now, honey?"

She broke away from him with a deep flush. "You certainly can ask more questions to the minute than any man I know," she cried, putting up the backs of her hands to her hot cheeks.

That night after she had gone to bed her father knocked at her door. She had been lying in bed reading *Princess Napraxine*, and her heart was yet beating for one of those finely upholstered scenes. It had beaten so violently in fact that the stiff frills on the breast of her night-gown had scraped softly together with its motion. The æsthetic luxury and passionate romance of the story fed her fancy and stirred her pulses. Reluctantly she slipped her book under the log-cabin quilt and said, "Come in."

Reuben Sterling entered, and the contrast which his appearance suggested with that of the world-worn and languid Othmar of the novel was somewhat startling. He was in his trousers and shirt, and the candle which he held lighted up his silver mane and deep-cut face. He sat down on the edge of the four-post bed, saying nothing for some time, and pinching the softened tallow of the candle about its wick. India began to move restlessly under the cotton sheet which she abhorred. She had been interrupted in the midst of a thrilling interview between the Princess

and Othmar, where he was offering to take her to a wonderful Oriental empire, which he was to purchase, as American magnates purchase peach-blow vases. India thought *she* would have gone, and she was panting with eagerness to know the irresistible Russian's decision. Oh, why would her father wear shirts split up the back, like a locust's shed skin, and walk about in his socks?

"Don't get narvous, sugar," he said, turning with a smile and laying his hand on her restless limbs. "I ain't a-goin' tuh stay long. I jes come in tuh say something tuh yuh." He looked at her lovingly, a long, wistful look, and began to stroke the bedclothes down over her pretty form. "I don't s'pose," he began, "ez how a chile ever knows the love ez its father en mother hez fur it. It's meant to be that a-way, I reckon. I've come tuh tell yuh, honey, that no matter what happens, or who yuh kyar fur, my love fur yuh'll be jes the same—jes the same, Inja. Inja?"

"Yes, father."

"Yuh do love me, honey, don't yuh?"

"Of course, father. How can you ask such silly questions?"

"I reckon 'tis silly," he said, a little wearily; "but some uv us is made that a-way."

"What way?" said the girl, impatiently. Oh, if he would only go, and let her find out if the lovely Princess fled with her prince of lovers!

He went on, caressing her absently. "Why tuh crave tuh hear love ez well ez tuh feel it. I've sometimes thought ez how enny other woman but yo' mother wud 've got tired tuh death uv hearin' a man ark so continual ef she loved him. Ah! what a sweet gyrl she wuz, my Bess! Pret'y too. Lighter complected 'n you, honey, en so—"

"Father," said India, "I hope you won't think I'm cross, but it makes me so nervous, your stroking me that way."

Sterling drew back his hand with a hasty movement. "Why didn't yuh tell me befo'!" he asked. "Well, I'm goin' in a minute, ennyhow. I'm breakin' up yo' beauty sleep. Inja?"

"Yes, father."

"Ef yuh ever cud—'bout Jorhn, yuh know."

"Well, I couldn't," said India, decidedly. "Never. So don't go to thinking about it. The idea! A man who smells of gu-

ano, and kills his own pigs!" It seemed almost desecration to even think of such a one while holding in her hand the record of the deeds and words of the superb Othmar.

"I kill my own horgs," said her father, slowly, not looking at her.

"I know you do. But it isn't a bit the same thing. At any rate I will never, never, *never* marry John Nixon."

"I'm sorry," said Sterling. He got to his feet, and then bending over, he kissed her twice. She was so eager to return to her book that she half drew it out from its hiding-place, then thrust it back again with a gusty sigh.

"I'm goin' right now," said her father, hurriedly. "I jes wanted to arsk yuh"—he paused a moment, and took the candle into his other hand—"b'out that thyar green silk yuh don't like. Ef—ef I git yuh another, wud yuh min' my takin' that back?"

"Not the least scrap," said the girl, sitting up in bed in her anxiety to be rid of him. "It's right there on the table. Now good-night. I really am too sleepy to talk any more."

"Good-night, honey," he answered, going toward the door with the silk in his hand. He turned again, however, when he reached it, and came back. Setting the candle on the floor, he kneeled down by the bed.

"Inja," he said, "put yo' arms 'round my neck en say 'good-night, daddy,' like yuh used tuh when yuh wuz little—'fo'—'fo' yo' mother went."

She writhed along toward him under the bedclothes, and put a hurried arm about his neck. She could not have put both as he had asked her without releasing the book, and it did not occur to her to do that. "Good-night, daddy," she said, kissing him quickly; "but I can't see why you want to be called that; it's so hideous."

"Never min', never min', honey," he said, getting again to his feet and gently patting her shoulder. "Good dreams tuh yuh!" Then he went.

As soon as the door closed behind him she returned ravenously to her novel. To her keen disappointment, the inexplicable heroine with her mystic smile refused to fly with the superb creature whose mere description thrilled India with a sense of being able to love. She thrust the book under her pillow, and drew from

the same source a hand-mirror. She laid this on the bed, and shaking down her heavy hair, made a rich twilight about her, through which she gazed down into her face. How red her lips were in the soft light! She smiled, and was in love with the whiteness of her small, sharp teeth. She pressed her thick hair against her nostrils, and was delighted because of its fragrance. Then turning over upon her side, she lifted the mirror high above her, and looked upward at her reflection. She was thrilled with the beauty of her large, clear eyes, and her white brow shining through the parted tangles above. The contour of her neck and throat seemed so lovely to her that she caressed them with her long, sensitive fingers. She half closed her eyes that she might catch the effect of sleep upon her face, and slightly disarranged her night-gown to show the beauty of her white shoulders and arms. She laughed and half talked to herself, then looked and laughed again.

Suddenly her candle leaped high and died. She started, and, with the return of a common childish instinct, drew the sheet over her head. She could see the last reflection of herself painted on the surging darkness. It seemed to look at her mockingly out of half-veiled eyes. The buzzing of the summer fields mixed with her whirring pulses. As if in revenge, some relative of the murdered katydid found its way into the room, and began its vibrant shrilling near her bed. With her own remembered eyes fast upon her, she fell into a conscious sleep.

Sterling meanwhile, still in his shirt and trousers, was kneeling before a small horse-hair-covered chest in his own room, his candle flaring unsavorily on a rush-bottomed chair at his side. He held close to his eyes an old daguerreotype, bound book-like in rusty black morocco. His elbow kept in place the apple-green silk, which was folded across one knee. Breathing upon the picture, he rubbed it gently with his large thumb that he might more clearly see the faded likeness. It was a portrait of his wife, not in the first bloom of youth, but as he best remembered her, in a black and white check gown, fastened at the neck with an oval brooch containing their wedded locks. Upon a somewhat obtrusive finger the golden wedding-ring was well displayed. These last-mentioned articles the considerate ar-

tist had neatly gilded, but Sterling had pride in remembering that the actual ornaments were not in any way shams. Her hair was gathered on either temple into a strange excrescence resembling a door-knob; but even this unique coiffure did not disturb the charm of the pretty, gracious face beneath.

"Ah, Bess! Bess!" he said, "yuh cert'n'y wud 'a liked this hyuh frawk—wudn't yuh, honey? It cert'n'y wud 'a become yuh—it cert'n'y wud." He again passed his thumb over the picture slowly several times, placed the green silk near the face, and after regarding the effect intently and with evident satisfaction, softly closed the shabby case, laid it underneath a fold of the silk, and put both away in the old chest.

"Father," said India, about a week afterward, "Mr. Lely's got a friend coming this evening. He wants to see you. He's coming to buy horses. He has gorgeous horses in New York. Mr. Lely wants him to see the colts."

"Me an' the colts are obligated," replied Sterling, without enthusiasm. He was mending an old harness with a bit of twine, and sat on a bench near the door between two beehives. The bees made friendly excursions up his arms and legs, and one that had got tangled in his blown hair was buzzing angrily. Sterling calmly took it between his thumb and forefinger and released it.

"I declare, father," cried the girl, "those things 'll turn on you some day and sting you to death. I don't see how you can bear to have 'em crawling over you that way."

"Yuh kyarn stan' my bees, en I kyarn stan' yo' Lely," was the terse reply. "We'll hev tuh put up wi' each othuh, sugar."

"Are you going to see the man, father?"

"Ef I ain' struck blin' 'fo' he comes, en he duz come, I s'pose it air in the co'se uv nachur, honey."

"He'll be here about four o'clock."

"That air onfortunate, bein' ez I won't."

"Won't what?"

"Be here."

"Will you be here at five?"

"Things p'int's that a-way."

"Well, I'll tell him. Er—father?"

"M'h?"

"Will you do me a great big favor?"

She knelt at his feet and put her open hands against his breast. The blown leaves overhead filled her dark eyes with changeful lights. She was very like her mother, only her temples lacked the door-knob arrangements. "I don't often ask a favor of you, now do I?"

"Yuh hev a way of gettin' 'em 'thout th' arskin'," he answered, smiling, as he put a large hand meshed in twine over her two small ones.

"But this ain't for myself, father."

"Tain't? Who is it fur, then? Fur Lely?"

"The idea! No; it's fur—guess who!"

"Ur—rur—ur—for Lely's frien'?"

"Lor', no, father. How can you? It's for your own dear old self."

"Fur me?"—tapping his central waistcoat button with a very straight middle finger—"me, sugar?"

"Yes, sir. It's something I want you to do to please me—and yourself too—something just lovely!"

"Yuh cert'n'y air sweet," he said, hugging her.

"You certainly are," replied India, pushing the loosened hair from her eyes with the back of her hand. "You're going to promise, father?"

"Well, I think hit's right likely. Ain't yuh goin' tuh tell me firs'?"

"You wait," she said, rising. She flew into the house. Returning soon, she found him in a chair under the cherry-trees. She came up behind him, and put a soft white towel about his neck, tucking it deftly under his shirt band. A moment later he heard the sharp click of a pair of scissors.

"What 're yuh a-doin', Inja?" he said, turning quickly. One of his white curls was in her hand. The wind loosened a few bright threads, and sent them drifting in the sunshine. He stared at her blankly, putting up a slow hand to his hair. India stood smiling and snapping her bright shears.

"I'm going to make you look perfectly beautiful," she said. "I'm afraid you'll get dreadfully vain. You must promise me you won't get vain. If you do, I—"

Sterling, who had turned a little pale, unfastened the towel without a word, shook it out, and folded it carefully upon his knee.

"Why, father!" she exclaimed.

"Yuh hev hyeered me say ez how yo' mother loved my hyah." He lifted his

eyes suddenly and looked at her—"Yuh kyarn do that, Inja!" he said, firmly.

She was flushing and drawing her lip in and out between her teeth. "I don't suppose she made any particular point of its being nearly to your waist."

"She liked it jes so," he said; "jes ez it air; en so it shell stay."

"You ain't going to let me cut it, then?"

"No, darter."

"Not when I tell you it 'll make you look like a different man?"

"No, darter."

"Not when I tell you it's downright tacky as it is?"

"No, Inja." He tightened his lips and rose, taking the half-mended harness over his arm.

She threw the scissors furiously down, when he had gone, and dashed the silver curl from her hand. The gusty wind blew it back, so that from breast to skirt hem she was strewn with the shining strands. The scissors, which had struck the ground points first, stood erect in the short grass, and a young rooster near by crowed shrilly. Her face changed. She put her hand to her short forehead curls with the frequent gesture.

"He's certainly coming," she said. "If the rooster or the scissors had been by themselves, I wouldn't have thought of it, but happening together, I can't but feel that he's coming."

Lely came shortly, without his friend. He placed his hand on India's shoulder as she stooped to pick up the scissors, and regarded her with a lush smile, which was stopped by two deep creases in his sleek cheeks.

"Well, sweetheart," he said, "I'm on my way to speak to your father. Steerman didn't come."

"Father is not in a very good humor," she said, turning under his hand. He pressed her to him with a flat palm, and enveloped her pretty mouth in the abundant smile.

"I'll soon put him in one," he assured her.

An hour afterward, Sterling appeared at the door, and called to India as she sat under the cherry-trees with some light work in her lap. She rose, after some elaborate preparations, consigning her thimble to its case, and running various needles through the small red flannel strawberry which served as her emery bag. When she entered the house, her

father was standing by the asparagus-filled fireplace, packing his white clay pipe with tobacco from a round pouch of purple sarcenet. He looked up at her from under his furry white brows keenly, almost severely.

"This hyuh gentleman," he said, indicating Lely by a tilt of his pipe stem—

"This hyuh gentleman— Won't you sit down, Inja?"

She sat down, feeling vaguely uncomfortable and apprehensive.

"This hyuh gentleman hev bin arskin' me ef he kin mah'y yuh. He sez, more-somever, ez how yuh knows the same. He sez ez how yuh air willin'. Air yuh?"

"Don't you believe Mr. Lely, father?" said India, with an attempt at pertness which she felt to be a failure. "Yes, I am," she repeated.

"Yuh air?" said Sterling.

"Yes, I am," she said again, taking some folds of her dress into a tight grasp.

Sterling held the string of the tobacco pouch between his teeth, and extracted from it another pinch of tobacco.

"Yuh air willin' tuh go wi' him ez his wife inter er strange country?"

"It isn't strange. It's America just as much as Virginia is."

Again he lifted his eyes and looked at her.

"Yo' mother's grave's hyuh," he said, hesitatingly; "en all ez hez loved yuh; en yuh is mighty young to mah'y."

"My mother was only seventeen—a year younger than I am—when she married you."

Sterling slowly drew together the mouth of his tobacco pouch, and transferred it to his trousers pocket. He laid his pipe on the table, and rubbed thoughtfully a shred of tobacco in the palm of one hand with the thumb of the other. His eyes looked beyond his daughter's face out upon the ever-moving green of the June leaves. "Yes," he said, "she war young; but she loved me fur twice her age." Then putting one hand on her head, he indicated Lely with the other. "Does yuh love him?" he asked, earnestly.

"I must beg of you—" began Lely.

India started free from her father's hand, and made a passionate movement toward the door. "You and Mr. Lely must decide that question between you," she said, avoiding her father's intent look. "I have told you I am willing to marry

him." She had reached and half passed through the door.

"Inja!" called her father. He held out both arms to her. "Don'—don' go away from me a'ready, honey," he said. "I won' arsk yuh nuthin' mo'—nuthin'—nuthin'!"

She came back, but not to his arms, resuming her seat near the window. Lely approached, and put one hand on the back of her chair. There was silence.

"I—I don' arsk fur nuthin' but her happiness," Sterling said, presently. His voice was low, and he did not speak distinctly.

"If it is in the power of mortals to be happy, she shall be so," Lely assured him, blandly.

Suddenly the old man turned upon him. "I don' know nuthin' 'bout yuh," he said. "Yuh sharn' hev her twell I fin' out."

Lely bowed with as much coldness as could emanate from so warm a personality. "I shall be happy to refer you to my friends," he said, fondling his glowing whiskers.

"I ain' a-goin' tuh fin' out from yo' frien's, but from mine," said Sterling, grimly. "Twell then yuh'd bes' keep away."

"Father!" cried India.

"Yuh kin come back hyuh in ten days," he continued, taking no notice of her—"not befo'. Good-mawnin', suh. I'ain' seen 'bout my hay-ricks tuh-day."

A letter from Sterling to his brother Colin at this juncture will serve to make some matters clearer:

"DERE COLLIN,—i heav bin thinkin wut yu sade in reegar tur mary Elizy-buth an hur egerkashun. The munn i wud giv cherfule but mi advis iz let hur larn all she kin ez the lams en carfs duz—so tur sa—frum her ma—it anet rite fur a chile's farthur tur feel that mos likeli she larfs at the wa he redes the Bibul—en that he do not keer fur hur tur see the leters he rites—besides menni othur thiernes. i wil rite mor in a weke

"Yure bruther

"REUBEN STERLING"

That sentence about the Bible was the only bitter thing Sterling had ever said or written in the whole course of his life.

The inquiries respecting Lely brought satisfactory replies as to his character. He was the possessor neither of vicious habits nor of violent virtues, but of de-

cided wealth and a corner establishment. Sterling made no further objection to the marriage. He was now so much occupied with his farm duties that India seldom saw him excepting at meals.

A short time before the wedding a large express parcel came to her, a wooden box, which she asked her father to open for her in the dining-room. The tremor of pleasant anticipation was upon her. Her nervous hands could scarcely untie the knots of white satin ribbon which held the paper covers. When they were undone she tossed them out to right and left. A quick cry stirred her throat. Her brown hair was loose about her, and fell into the open box as she leaned over it. Sterling saw her flushed face through the close strands. He had seen her mother stoop and flush in that way over gifts he had brought her from Cherryville before India was born. He took his inner lip between his teeth and held it thoughtfully, while fitting a contemplative thumb into either armpit.

"What's so pret'y, sugar?" he said, finally.

"Oh, it's so exquisite! it's so exquisite!" cried the girl, lifting out some shining white draperies in her arms, and carrying them to the green-baize-covered table as women carry a baby.

"Psha! I can't lay it there, it's so crumby," she said, jerking sideward an impatient shoulder. "Father, can't you get a sheet? Quick! Oh, I'm dying to see it all!"

Sterling brought a somewhat crumpled expanse which he had taken from his own bed.

"Why on earth didn't you get a clean one?" India exclaimed. "Oh, do *pray* be careful! You'll be trampling all over it first thing. Why *won't* you get some slippers for the house?"

"I will when I come to see you," he replied, with a rather listless smile.

India was too much absorbed in unfolding the generous breadths of satin and lace to notice him further. It was an exceedingly handsome gown, heavily fringed with orange flowers, and bearing the name of the accomplished Donovan in broad gilt flourishes on the white inside belt. As she held it up in one hand, and smoothed out the lace with soft dashing little movements of the other, Sterling sat forward in his chair, and an alert expression came into his face.

"What's that, ennyhow?" he asked.

"Why, can't you see? Don't you see the orange blossoms? Look! ain't it lovely? Those orange blossoms must have cost a mint. My heavenly parent! what seams! Well, he certainly is generous. You can't deny that, if you don't like him."

Sterling was at her side instantly. With one hand upon her shoulder, he grasped the orange-blossomed garment with the other. "Did Lely sen' you this?"

She was so astonished that she stood quite still without replying.

"Did Lely sen' you this?" he repeated.

She bridled, and put her hands to her loosened hair. "Of course he did. Who else did you think was going to do it?"

"Me. Is it fathers or strangers ez gener'lly gives thar darters their weddin' frawks?"

"Oh, I suppose fathers generally do, but I must say I think it was lovely of him."

"Do yuh?" said Sterling.

"Yes, I do," she replied, somewhat crossly, reaching after the gown which he still held. He held her back with a strong hand, and spoke in a rough voice.

"Wud yuh tech that air thing 'fo' me?"

Her lips fell apart in unfeigned amazement. "What do you mean?" she cried to him.

"I mean—I mean—Gord!" he exclaimed, dashing the garment on the floor and catching her suddenly into a fierce clasp. "He sharn't hev yuh! Tuh steal yo' very honesty away from me!" Then he freed her, turned away to the window, mechanically took out his tobacco pouch, and thrust it back again into his pocket; came back, and stooping down, lifted the dress from the floor. He crushed it into the box with rough, hurried fingers; his heavy, well-cut lips twitched curiously.

India sprang forward and caught at his hand. "You'll spoil it," she panted—"you'll spoil it, I tell you! What're you doing? What're you going to do? No, no, no! Let it alone—let it alone!"

He put his hand on her fingers, which were clasped upon the rough edge of the box. They gripped it like steel. He lifted his eyes and looked at her, and she had a strange feeling as if an ice-cold wind had blown between her lids. "I don't want tuh hurt yuh," he said, quietly. "Will yuh take down yo' han'?"

She took it down without a word. With pale lips and cheeks she sat down,

her hands upon her knees, watching him as with rough, hurried fingers he fitted each board back into its place. Then he nailed on a square of ruled paper, and going to the cupboard took from it an old stone inkstand and some quill pens. As he dipped one of the pens into the inkstand she broke into derisive laughter.

"If *you* are going to address it," she said, "you might as well pitch it into the fire. He'll never get it."

A sharp red flashed into his face. "Come hyuh," he called to her. She moved her body sullenly in her dress. He caught her eye, and repeated his command. She got angrily and tardily to her feet, and he held out the pen to her. "Back it yo'self to Lely," he told her. She turned and flung the pen out of the window, her eyes alight with defiance. He quietly selected another, dipped it in the ink, and handed it to her. She laughed and sent it after the other. He took a third, opened her hand and shut her fingers upon it.

"Write!" he said, looking at her, and she obeyed.

India was married in white Oriental lace and organdie muslin in the little parish church. There were not many guests. She was not popular with the daughters of neighboring farmers, and Sterling had only one brother near enough to attend the wedding. The afternoon was full of crooning sounds. An oak branch kept up a gentle tapping on one of the long Gothic windows during the entire ceremony. Before she became Mrs. Ruthven Lely the light in the church had changed from green to orange. Sterling stood looking down at his crossed hands. Some flower petals drifted in through an open window, making red stains on the quiet shadows.

Sterling started when the Reverend Mr. Gault suddenly dropped his clerical voice and, assuming a week-day tone, spoke cheerfully to the bridegroom. He had been thinking of his Bess, and how lovely she had looked at their wedding thirty years ago, dressed in a white dainty frock, with locust flowers at her breast, and the door-knobs softened into curls.

All at once India turned with a half-vacant, frightened look. She rushed against her father and stood grasping him. It was not what he had expected. She had been very cold to him of late, almost ig-

noring him. He put his arm about her and held her silently.

"Oh, do you think I'll be happy?—do you think I'll be happy?" she urged, in a strained whisper. "Say it—say it anyhow. Oh, father! I'm so afraid I won't be happy. Oh, father! I'm so afraid I won't. I'm so afraid." He blessed and kissed her, doing his best to reassure her. She had not been so near him in heart or body for many a day.

He did not see her again for six years. She went abroad that autumn, and in Nice her child was born. "A splendid boy," she wrote—she was sure her father would be proud of him. She sent his photograph, wherein he was represented as a sturdy cherub in an open-work flannel shirt. His name was written across his chubby little creased legs in a way that Sterling thought slovenly, and in a chirography to which he was just becoming accustomed. It looked as though it had been traced with a sharpened match dipped in very thick ink, and gave one a sense of wasted material.

Young Lely's name was Algernon Ruthven. Sterling felt a little twinge, which he immediately decided was unnatural. Reuben was certainly not a pretty name, and his grandson's had evidently been selected with regard to euphony. He was nevertheless a fine little fellow; and the proud grandfather often propped up the photograph on the table, and regarded it steadfastly while smoking his evening pipe.

India's letters came with a certain regularity. When there was a long interval between two, two more were sure to come very close together. It is true that she never said much, and those violently black and straggling characters took up more space than would have accommodated many ideas. She was very happy. She was learning to speak French and German, and to sing, and she played quite well on the piano; she had many horses and carriages; her wardrobe was unlimited; she enjoyed society to the utmost; and so on.

Apparently the marriage had been a splendid success. With her protracted absence, Sterling's longing to see her handsome, wilful face increased. He wrote to her once a month in a round, quavering hand which he had learned with much painstaking from blue-covered copy-books

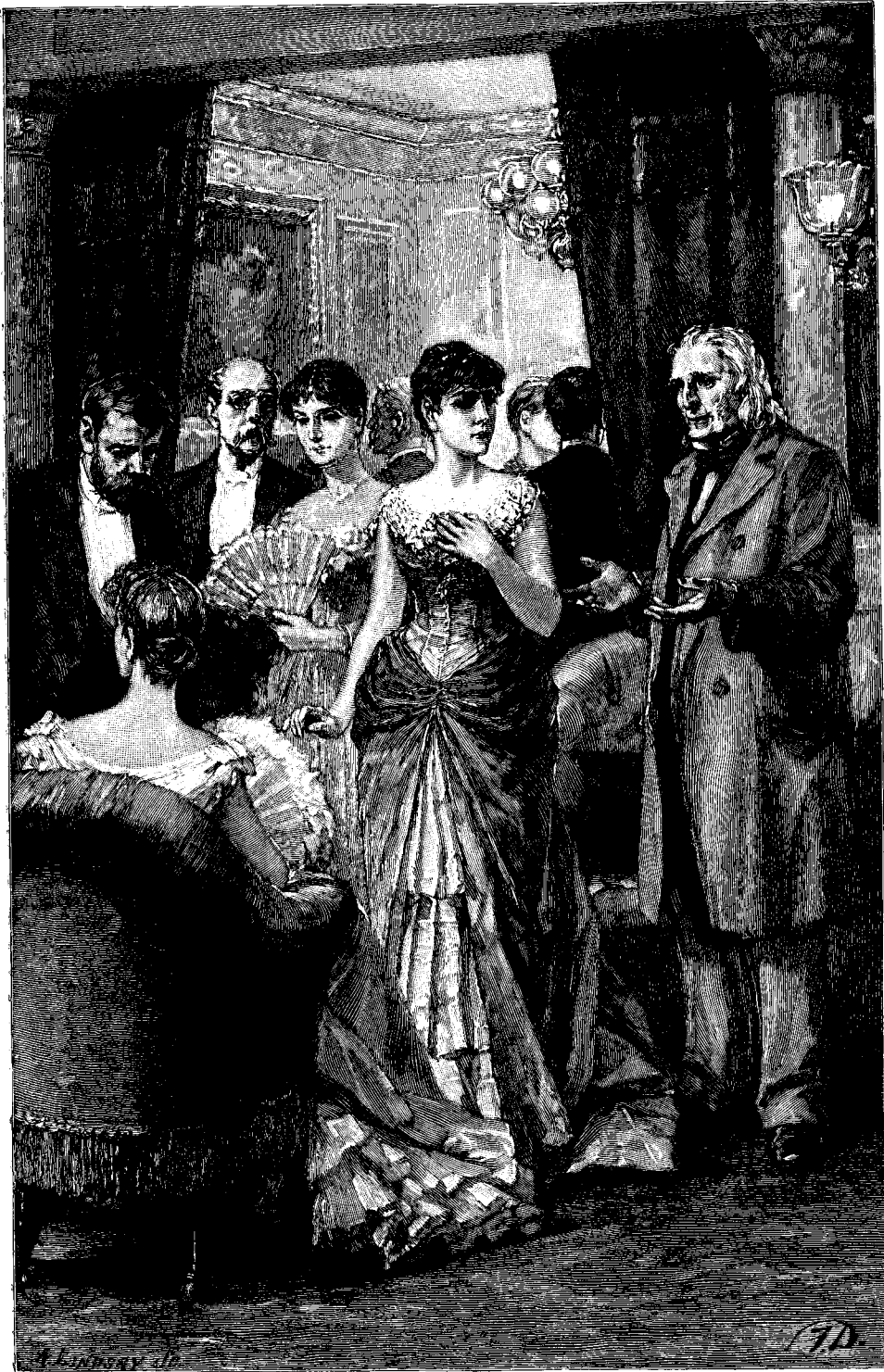
purchased in Cherryville. He sometimes inserted in his letters the wise and dogmatic sentences which he found in these volumes. Thus he ended a letter in regard to a grand ball which she had been too ill to attend with these words: "But you musn't fret. Disappointment frequently attends man." It sounded exceedingly well, and was written astonishingly better than the rest, as he had the full copy to follow.

Finally, after years of this difficult correspondence, he received a letter from India announcing their arrival in New York. He could scarcely realize it. He kept the letter by him all day, and paused in a driving snow-storm to spell out again the strange news. An almost fierce excitement stirred him. It was within two weeks of Christmas. He would give his girl a few days to rest, and then he would rush on to New York and welcome her. He went to Cherryville and bought a new suit of "store clothes"—dark blue coat and trousers, with waistcoat to match, a pair of boots which he remarked looked "as ef they war death on bunyons," a pair of blue mittens with crimson streaks on the back, an imitation rattan cane, with a silver-washed handle in hammered-work, and a tall hat ornamented with a broad band of crape, which he did not remove.

The evening before he was to start he selected very carefully four Albemarle pippins of superlative size, and spent a half-hour in polishing them and tying up their stems with awkward bows made of ribbon which his wife had taken from various bonnets and pressed. "Uv co'se the leetle feller'll hev all the fine fiddle-faddles ez money kin buy," he told himself while stowing these treasures away in his travelling bag of light brown worsted-work with its wreath of gorgeous flowers encircling the variegated initials R. S. It had been the handiwork of his well-loved Bess. "Uv co'se he'll hev all the fines' tricks kin be got in New Yawk; but thar ain' no apples like these hyuh in New Yawk, *thet's* shore!"

The next morning, as he was crossing the little plot at the back of his house, he slipped on the ice and fell, injuring himself so badly that he was confined to his bed for a week. This was a great disappointment, but he would still be able to meet his daughter on Christmas Eve. He would give her a surprise.

Sterling had never seen any town lar-



"‘I—I AM SO ASTONISHED,’ SHE SAID.”

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ger than Cherryville. He reached Jersey City early in the evening. The broken glow of numberless lights on the sullenly breathing water held his eyes. As he crossed the river in the ferry-boat he seemed drifting nearer and nearer to ramparts that blazed after the glorious fashion connected only, in his mind, with the Celestial City. The sharp whirl of the cog-wheels aroused him, and he found his way with the crowd to the yawning maws of many cabs. Into one of these he stepped mechanically, and not until he was asked by the driver did he think of mentioning his destination. It had not occurred to him to go first to a hotel. His one thought was to see India again, and to hold her in his arms. His very breast ached with the longing which grew more and more intense every moment.

The cab stopped before a large house which loomed massively against the strangely tinted sky. In a space to the left the slender shaft of the Madison Square electric light thrust aloft its dazzling glome as though a vast century-plant had burst into blossoms of fire. He had never dreamed of such a sight. He stood and looked at it, putting up one hand to his eyes. The monotone of Broadway sounded in his ears like the booming of a summer field possessed by millions of brass and iron katydids.

He went up the stone stairway, and it was some time before he could find the door-bell. He rang several times in vain, pulling too lightly to be heard. At last he tried the door itself, giving it a slight push, and to his surprise it opened. He found himself in a large hall hung with many draperies that bewildered him. He connected hangings only with windows, and "wood-boxes," and the upper skirts of women. He turned mechanically and went into a large room to the left. It was rich in much indescribable modern upholstery, and there seemed to be an epidemic of small carved chairs with impossible legs and backs. As he stood gazing about him he saw himself reproduced in many mirrors, and stretching away, like the kings in *Macbeth*, possibly to the crack of doom. In the distance some doors were suddenly swung open, and a tide of light and laughter swept over him. Against the brilliant square of further radiance the advancing figures seemed at first mere silhouettes; but as they approached, passing under a cluster of wax-lights, he saw

distinctly the face of the woman nearest him.

It was India. She wore a flame-colored gown that clasped her with a wet shining. Her arms were naked to her shoulders, there was a knot of nasturtiums against her very low corsage, and her thick, high-combed hair was sewn in and out with uncut rubies. She was talking gayly to the woman with whom she had linked arms, and did not see her father till she was within his reach. Then their eyes met.

"Inja!" he said, gladly, holding out his arms.

She put up her hand, crushing the nasturtium blossoms. The color left her face. Her other hand was still on the arm of the woman standing beside her.

"Inja!" he said again. She stood quite still. Presently she withdrew her hand and extended it stiffly. "I—I am so astonished," she said. "We did not know—"

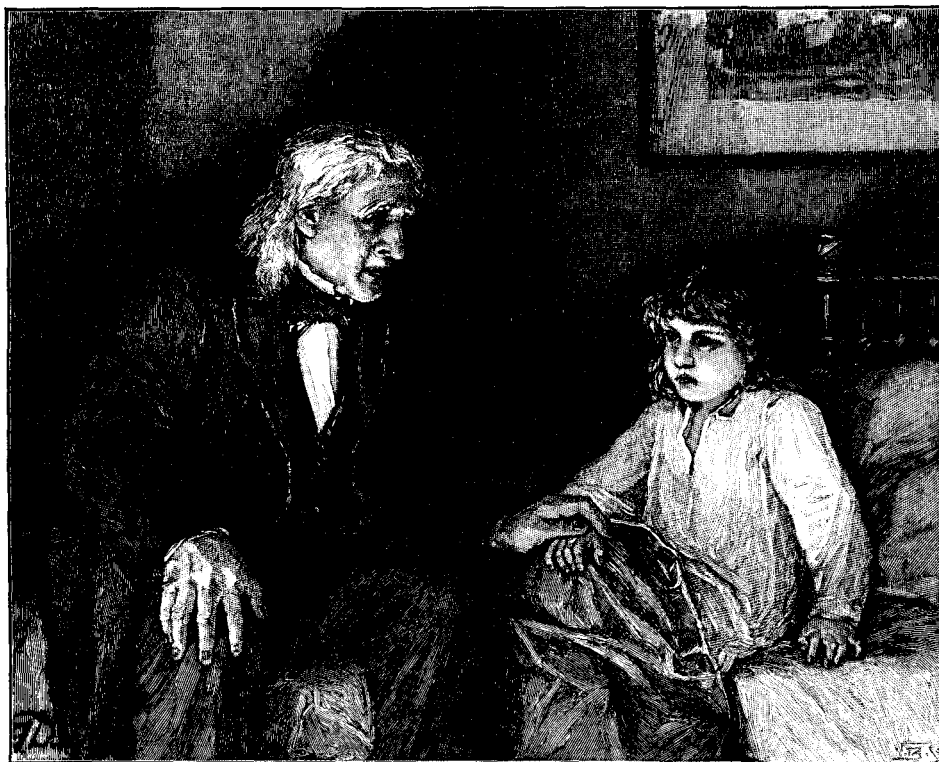
Sterling folded the pretty hand between his own. "I wanted tuh su'prise yuh," he answered, gently. "Are yuh glad tuh see me, Inja?"

"How can you ask?" she said, hurriedly. "You—are quite well, aren't you?" He noticed some subtle change in her voice; it was not the voice of her girlhood.

"Yes, tol'able smart," he replied. "You air lookin' so sweet, Inja." The hands that held hers were trembling. He was longing to feel her arms about his neck.

The guests, who had been dining with the Lelys, stood about in languid groups, a little curious. Some of them vaguely remembered having heard that Mrs. Lely was a Virginian. This old man was evidently some spoiled, old-time servant who did not know his place. But it was quite touching, his apparent devotion, and she was very nice and gracious in her manner toward him.

Still Sterling stood holding her hand and looking at her. There was a poppy-red under her dark eyes, and the crushed nasturtiums rose and fell with her quick breathing. She made no move to come nearer to him. Suddenly it flashed upon him: she was ashamed to call him "father" before these people. He was standing there, loving her, yearning over her, and she was ashamed of him! He dropped her hand and clasped his own together. For a moment her face seemed unfamiliar to him. The red of her gown



"AIN' YO' MOTHER EVER TOL' YUH?"

was harsh to his eyes. She was not India—not his India. She was the scarlet woman of whom his mother used to read in the long Sabbaths that marked out his childhood. He stepped backward—an awkward movement which pulled the gown of a girl who stood near him.

"Yo' pardon, miss," he said, mechanically.

She smiled at him sweetly, and said it made not the least difference in the world. The lady with whom India had entered put up her *pince-nez*.

"Er—a—the overseer on your father's farm, probably, Mrs. Lely? How charming these Southern attachments are! What a fine head!"

"No—that is—that is—I mean," stammered India, her eyes wide and frightened, and half reaching out her hand to him.

He turned again, once more erect. "That is it, madam," he said, in a full, unshaken voice. "I wuz the overseer on her father's farm." Some instinct showed him the right door. He passed through and stood in the hall without.

As he stood there gazing about him, two arms were thrown about his neck, and some one kissed him. It was India. Her hair was loosened about her eyes, and she pushed it up with the old familiar gesture as she clung to him. Sterling stood looking down on her. He did not attempt to caress her or to speak.

"Oh, father," she said, "what on earth made you come at such a time—before all those horrid people? I couldn't say a thing. I was never so startled and confused in all my life. It was a terrible shock. I'm not so strong as I used to be. See how my heart is beating yet." She lifted his work-worn hand and laid it against her satin bodice. "Isn't it dreadful? It beats that way at the least excitement. All the doctors say I mustn't have the least excitement. They said it in London and Paris, and now they say it here. I couldn't believe my eyes when I first saw you. I thought I must be delirious. I was delirious when Algy was born, and I used to see you then. I tell you what to do, father. Come early—ear-

ly to-morrow, and we'll have a lovely long talk, and I'll tell you everything, and you must lunch and dine with us—all to ourselves, and we'll go and see a play. I'll love to see you at your first play, father. It's really too horrid seeing you first before all those people. Ah! what was that? Never mind. I did not mean to drop your hand—give it to me again—I thought I heard some one coming. I do hate to leave you and go back to all those stupid people, but I must. I know you will understand how it is." She paused a moment, but he said nothing. "Don't you, daddy dear?" she went on, coaxingly.

"Inja," he said, abruptly, "whar's the boy?"

"Algy?" she replied, dropping her coaxing tone. "Why, in bed, of course. You'll see him to-morrow. He's such a beauty—just like a little prince."

Sterling shifted his position a little. "I—er—suppose I couldn't see him to-night?" he said, hesitatingly.

"To-night? Why, he's asleep, you know."

"I wouldn't wake him, Inja." He turned to her, his voice shaking a little for the first time. "Let me see him. How kin I fin' him?"

She moved away nervously. "Come," she said, "I will show you." He followed her up to the third story. She threw open a door and stood on the threshold, holding aside her skirts. "I won't go in," she whispered; "they'll be wondering about me. Try not to wake him. Do you see his dear little stocking? Ain't it cute?" She had forgotten her married voice and language for the moment. "There he is in the little cot over there. Don't wake him if you can help it; he was so excited about Santa Claus that I could scarcely coax him to sleep. Good-night, daddy dear. Come early to-morrow. Now remember." She kissed him again and was gone.

Sterling stood on the threshold looking about the airy room. In the pink glow from the coal fire the ceiling overhead was a net-work of slender vibrating shadows from the nursery fender. Gay-colored prints gleamed on the walls. An enormous rocking-horse on springs stood in one corner. The fire-light caught a heap of glittering toys and the rounds of the little brass cot. Sterling stepped softly into the room and closed the door behind him. He could hear the child's soft

breathing in the warm hush. The sound of the city passed him like a wind on a far errand. Some coals dropped tinkling on the brass below.

He went over and stood looking down upon the sleeping child. The boy had tossed aside the bedclothes, and his nightgown was parted over his square little chest. He had grappled the blue silk coverlet as though in mortal contest, and his handsome brows were knotted angrily under the heavy bronze of his thick, half-curling locks.

Sterling stood some moments silent, and then sat down on the edge of the cot. He ventured to reach forth a gentle hand and rest it upon the tossed limbs. The wind outside swelled solemnly, and it had begun to snow. All at once the boy's eyes opened wide. He lay quiet at first, and then started half erect.

"Oh! is you Santa Claus?" he said. "I've been watchin' and watchin' for you. Did you comed down the chimmerny with all the fire in it? Did you bwing me what I wited for?" peering anxiously about.

"What did you want, honey?" asked Sterling.

"Oh! a sled six times as beeg as Joe Van Skinner's, and a beeg ball, and a wockin'-horse with the live inside of him, and a dwum that dwumbles like a weal dwum, and a horn that can blow chunes, and a—and a— Did you bwing 'em?" he ended, hopefully.

"No, honey," said Sterling, smiling. "I didn't bring yuh all them thyar, but I brought somethin' moughty nice all the same. Ef you'll promise me not tuh eat 'em twell mawnin', I'll show 'em tuh yuh."

"Is you Santa Claus?" asked the boy, evading this point. "I fought Santa Claus had a beeg fur coat and a long white beard."

"Yuh mus'n' unkiver yuhsef so, honey," admonished Sterling, gently. "Yuh'll git yo' death firs' thing. 'Ain' yuh ever heered uv yo' gran'pa?"

"Oh yes," said the child, readily, and Sterling's face brightened a little.

"Hev yuh?" he said. "Well, honey, I'm yo' gran'pa."

Young Lely's eyes grew big with astonishment. "It's wong to tell stowies," he said, presently, in an awed tone. "Ain't you 'fwaid?"

"What duz yuh mean?" asked Sterling, puzzled. "I 'ain' tol' no story, honey."

"But you is! you is!" cried the boy.

“My dwanpapa is beeger wound ‘an you, and shorter down, and his hair is slipped down about his neck, and his top shines, and he divs me ponies and things, and he says, ‘Fy! fy!’”

“But little boys kin hev two gran’pas,” urged Sterling, gently. “‘Ain’ yo’ mother ever tol’ yuh ‘bout yo’ other gran’pa?”

The boy shook his bright head with solemn negation.

“She ain’ never tol’ yuh?” said Sterling, roughly, putting his hand to his throat. “She must ha’, honey,” he persisted—“she must ha’. You think.”

The boy puckered his square brow, and was silent for a moment or two in deep meditation. Then he shook his head again. “No, she isn’t telled me,” he said.

Sterling put down his face into his two hands, and was so quiet that the child, after waiting a few moments, edged nearer to him over the rumpled bedclothes and pulled his sleeve.

“Is you sleepy?” he asked. “Please don’t go sleep ‘fore you show me what you is got for me.”

Sterling took away his hands, and reaching far down in his overcoat pockets, drew out one by one the four ribbon-adorned pippins, and laid them on the bed. The boy, who had been watching him excitedly, tossed back upon his pillow with a little cry of disgust. “Shuh!” he cried; “nuthin’ but ole apples! I hate apples!”

Sterling took one absently in his hand and settled its bright red bow. “These air mighty nice ones,” he said, softly.

“I don’t care; I hate ‘em,” reiterated the boy, angrily. He took them separately and threw them with all his might out into the room. One of them struck the big horse, which began to prance solemnly on its well-managed springs.

Sterling rose to his feet. It seemed to him that somehow he must get out of the room. He could scarcely see, and went gropingly, feeling before him with open hands. As he stumbled on, a sweet voice suddenly hailed him.

“Mister Dwanpa! Mister Dwanpa! don’ go. I’m fe’ful sawwy. Won’t you please kiss me good-night, Mister Dwanpa?” The little figure was out of bed, pattering toward him with open arms. “Lif’ me up to your mouf, and I’ll kiss you sweet.” Sterling stooped down and lifted him up and kissed him. Then he carried him back to bed, and laid him be-

tween the fine sheets, feeling the little feet to see if they were warm. But suddenly Algy bounced out on the other side. “The apples!—I mus’ pick up the apples,” he said, trudging about with the impeding night robe well in his sturdy grasp. Then he clambered into bed again. “There, Mister Dwanpa, I’ll try and like these, anyhow. I was howwid to frow ‘em. Duz you fink Santa Claus will put switches in my stocking for frowin’ ‘em? Well, good-night. Will you pat me a little?”

Sterling tucked him in again, then softly patted him until he fell asleep.

When he passed through the lower hall on his way out of the house, he could hear the gay hum of voices in the drawing-room. The clang of the heavy door shut them away from him, and once more he stood in the street, staring up through shielding fingers at the electric light in Madison Square. He walked absently on until he reached Broadway, and the surging Christmas Eve sight-seers and shop-goers drew him into their onward flux. His eyes were tired of the glare, and his feet felt very sore and weary. A little newsboy came up and thrust a soiled paper at him. He did not want the paper, but the pinched face spoke to him, and he gave the boy a dollar. The little fellow’s eyes grew as big as the round of silver in his dirty palm. He turned, after one scared look at the donor, and scuttled away into the ever-changing crowd.

Sterling paused after a while before a building into which a great many people seemed to be pouring. He ventured to question the little newsboy, who here turned up again. “What’s this place?” he asked.

“A theaytre,” replied the boy, who would have added some uncomplimentary term had he not just then been regarding Sterling in the light of an investment.

“Kin I go in?”

“Well, why don’ chur try?” replied the boy, grinning.

“Thank yuh,” said Sterling, gravely. He purchased a ticket, after more inquiries, and soon found himself in a strange place. He had always had a vague idea of what a theatre was like, and knew that the people speaking, on the raised platform with its wreath of lights, must be some of the “play-actors” of whom he had so often heard. His seat was in the orchestra, a few rows back from the stage. The first act was over. The play was

King Lear, and John McCullough was the leading actor.

At first Sterling felt hopelessly out of accord with it all. He could not understand the strangely mouthed words. The flicker of the foot-lights was bewildering. The closeness of the crowded room stifled him. The man who sat next to him held a pair of crutches between his knees. One of these slipped to the floor, and Sterling picked it up for him, receiving a pleasant smile, which encouraged him to put one or two questions.

"The old man," his informant told him, "is named King Lear. He has divided all his money and his kingdom between his two daughters—Regan and Goneril. There, that's Regan, the one in yellow with the pearl beads around her waist. Goneril's the one in green, sitting down there behind that man in the purple coat. King Lear loved his youngest daughter, Cordelia, the best; but she wouldn't flatter him, so he gave all to the other two. You came too late to see Cordelia in the first act. Miss Kate Forsyth takes the part. I'll show her to you when she comes on. Now you watch the rest of the play for yourself, and see how the old king's daughters treat him."

It was only by degrees that Sterling began to comprehend the awful meaning of the drama. Then suddenly his listless attitude changed. He leaned forward; his finely cut lips fell apart; his hands grasped the back of the chair in front of him. As the sisters turned one after the other upon the poor old king, his breath came sharply. That wonderful voice of McCullough seemed to reach the very fibres of his heart and play upon them. And it was strange—strange! He had not thought that other fathers' daughters forgot them—denied them. How his heart bled for the poor old man! He longed to speak to him and comfort him. The now frequent recurrence of applause jarred upon him. His mind was casting off all its sluggishness. He seemed to suffer in his own flesh with the white-haired king upon the stage, to be in some strange way identified with him. Then came the terrible curse. A sudden flame leaped through all his veins. He started to his feet. The man of the crutches, somewhat amused, put a kindly hand on his arm.

"I see it affects you very much," he said; "but you had better sit down. Those behind you cannot see."

But Sterling seemed not to notice him. "I'm a-goin'," he said—"I'm a-goin'." He strode out into the aisle, leaving his hat underneath his chair. The lame man held it out to him, but he did not see.

Again he was in the street. Different people directed him again to his daughter's house. Again he stood before it, and pushed open the heavy door. The guests were still there. He heard them laughing behind the rich portières. His thick white hair was blown and matted with sleet. He pushed aside a heavy curtain and stood before them all. India was standing near the fireplace, fanning herself slowly with a fan of flaming feathers. She stopped with a terrified cry as she caught sight of him. The dropped fan leaped on its chain at her side.

"Father!" she exclaimed. "Father!"

"Yes," he answered; "'tis time yuh said it—'tis time yuh said it. En yuh shell take me by the han' en say it afore all these people. Yuh shall call me father afore all yo' frien's!" He stepped forward and took her by the hand roughly, and drew her out into the room. "Tell these hyuh people who I am," he commanded.

She faltered forth the word "father" again.

Then he flung her from him. "Yuh lie!" he cried; "yuh lie! Yuh ain' no daughter o' mine! Yuh lie to call me father!"

He flung her from him, and rushed out. India struggled to her feet and followed him. The hall door was wide open. She stood there in her gorgeous fire-colored dress, and the wind and sleet drove in upon her. She called him wildly, over and over, many times. Her long hair was blown loose, and whipped out on the pitiless night. When they came to her she had fallen athwart the threshold, and her white hands grasped the ice-coated stones beyond.

Sterling's one idea had been to get away from the house. He walked rapidly, many squares, before looking up. It was after midnight, and Broadway was but a dim reflection of its earlier brilliancy. Shops were being closed every moment; the crowds had thinned out greatly. Now and then a gust of snow hissed in among the sleet. He was beginning to feel cold, and to long for a place to rest. It occurred to him that he might find lodgings for the night. He stepped under a lamp with its

murky halo, and felt for his pocket-book. It was gone. He searched all his pockets, and in that of his waistcoat found a five-cent piece. He stood holding it in his hand and staring down at it.

"Please, mister, I'm so hungry!" piped a voice at his elbow. The little newsboy again.

"Yes, yuh look it," said Sterling, ponderingly. "What duz yuh want?"

"Bread," said the small hypocrite—"a quarter for bread. Me mother'n me four little sisters 're dyin' fur lack of one mouthful. A quarter, please, mister, fur Chris'mus luck."

"I 'ain' got but five cents," said Sterling, slowly; "somebody's done picked my pocket."

"Will I call a keb fur ye, sir?"

"What fur?"

The boy spread his light eyes. "Why, ter be gittin' home, sir."

"I ain' got no home hyuh," said Sterling.

The boy took one foot into his hand and whistled. "Ye'll be friz stiff ef yer lark about in this much longer," he remarked, presently.

"Ain' thar nowhar I kin git tuh sleep fur five cents?"

The boy reflected a moment. "The places 'll all be shut now," he said. "I wuz goin' ter pile inter one fur ter-night meself, but I lost me last cent playin' poker. I tell yer wot, mister, I know a reel warm cuddy where we kin sleep, and there's a place where ye kin git coffee at fi' cents fur two cups all night long."

"I cert'n'y wud like some," said Sterling.

"Will yer gimme one ef I show yer?"

"Cert'n'y, yuh pore leetle critter. I wisht I hed mo' tuh give yuh."

They found the coffee-house, and had a smoking cup apiece.

"I wisht we cud set hyuh a bit," said Sterling, looking wistfully about him.

"Well, yer can't; so come on," said his guide.

They passed again into the whirling night. The boy stopped at last in a somewhat sheltered corner, before a great, seven-storied building. He squatted down, and called to Sterling to follow his example.

"Yer feel how warm it is?" he asked, triumphantly.

"Kin I set down?" asked Sterling, in a tired voice.

"Uv co'se. It's where I sleep. We kin lay clost. Ainchur got no topper? 'V'yer got a neck rag, then?"

"A what?" inquired Sterling.

"A neckercher. Yer kin wrap yer head in it ef yer've got one. It 'll keep yer warmer. Now spoon me."

Sterling stretched himself out on the warm flag-stone, and the boy nestled up against him. The wind was dying down, and the street lights burned more steadily.

"I say," remarked the boy, suddenly, in a sleepy voice, "where're yer from, cully?"

"Faginiah," answered Sterling. Something seemed binding his throat.

"Ole Virginny never tire?" said the boy. "Strikes me yer wuz right neat done up fur ole Virginny, pardy. Wot's it like?"

"What? Faginiah?" queried Sterling.

"Yes. Wot's the aspeck uv the country?"

"Well, it's moughty big, 'n' green, 'n' warm mos' uv the time. En thar's mountings, en fiel's with sheep in 'em, en sometimes the sheep is red mos' as the groun' they're on. En sometimes it's so warm at Chris'mus that the peach flowers come out like it wuz spring, en—"

"Wot yer givin' us—lumps?" said the boy, drowsily.

"I put some roses on Bess's grave lars Chris'mus myself," Sterling went on, unheedingly. "We didn' haul ice twell late in Feb'ry. It cert'n'y wuz a mil' winter."

"I'll jes drif' yore way some er these days," said the boy, still more drowsily. "Yer mus' tell me where yer live, cully. Well, merry Chris'mus ter yer, 'n' good-night."

"Good-night—merry Chris'mus!" responded Sterling, wearily.

The boy slept, and at intervals snored sturdily. As the night wore away the warmth died out of the flagging. A piercing cold began to trickle through Sterling's very marrow. The boy's breath warmed a small space on his breast. He drew the little fellow closer, and clasped one of the dirty, dry, hot hands. Its owner was warm, at all events.

Sterling felt a slightly drowsy sensation begin to steal over him. Suddenly he started awake. He thought India had been bending over him in her blood-colored gown. It seemed to melt and drip

on him. Then it was her son who pelted him with apples. They hurt him like knives where they struck. One seemed to crush in the ribs over his heart. He put up his hand imploringly, and India laughed. She laughed merrily, lightly. Her little son joined in. She began to help him throw the apples. The laughter rose into a great wind that bore him away and away.

It was Christmas in Virginia. The peach-trees had bloomed too soon. He was breaking off a branch for Bess—no, for India....

PAULINE PAVLOVNA.

BY THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH.

SCENE: *Petersburg. Period: the present time. A ballroom in the winter palace of the Prince —. The ladies in character costumes and masks. The gentlemen in official dress and unmasked, with the exception of six tall figures in scarlet kaftans, who are treated with marked distinction as they move here and there among the promenaders. Quadrille music throughout the dialogue.*

Count SERGIUS PAVLOVICH PANSHINE, who has just arrived, is standing anxiously in the doorway of an antechamber with his eyes fixed upon a lady in the costume of a maid of honor in the time of Catherine II. The lady presently disengages herself from the crowd, and passes near Count PANSHINE, who impulsively takes her by the hand and leads her across the threshold of the inner apartment, which is unoccupied.

HE.

Pauline!

SHE.

You knew me?

HE.

How could I have failed?

A mask may hide your features, not your soul.
There is an air about you like the air
That folds a star. A blind man knows the night,
And feels the constellations. No coarse sense
Of eye or ear had made you plain to me.
Through these I had not found you; for your eyes,
As blue as violets of our Novgorod,
Look black behind your mask there, and your voice—
I had not known that either. My heart said,
"Pauline Pavlovna."

SHE.

Why have you no mask?

HE.

The Emperor's orders.

SHE.

Is the Emperor here?

I have not seen him.

HE.

He is one of the six
In scarlet kaftans and all masked alike.
Watch—you will note how every one bows down
Before those figures, thinking each by chance
May be the Tsar; yet none knows which is he.
Even his counterparts are left in doubt.
O wretched Russia! No serf ever wore
Such chains as gall our Emperor these sad days.
He dare trust no man.

SHE.

All men are so false.